

The Need to Meet and Greet

-A message to all Sri Lankans

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This little note is a sequel to a friendly request made asking for a meaningful message to be addressed to Sri Lankans living in New Zealand. It is widely known that even in the city of Auckland there are many associations founded in the name of Sri Lanka. If proliferation of institutions which are intended to serve a single good cause imply a diversification or a deflection to a point even of negating the original intentions, then one is a little cautious about singing ' happy birth day to you.'

Whether the Sri Lankans in New Zealand [if such a concept does exist in the minds of even some people] wish to carry memories of the land of their genesis or whether they wish to merge their identity in the apparently larger pool of New Zealand [like the Lake Taupo] which is fortunately now their home of adoption, the name Sri Lanka will continue to stay as a part of known history. It is only the mischievous and perilous game of re-writing history which is becoming very characteristic of this part of the century like a sting in the tail, which will endeavour to take it off the scene.

Sri Lanka is reputed to have had an unparalleled history of multi-ethnic and multi-religious harmony for well over centuries, unmindful of demographic minorities and majorities. Mutual harmony and respect among the different ethnic and religious groups is known to have existed from times unknown. It certainly was not one of tolerance, as from an imperialistic higher to a subordinate lower. But one of recognition with adequate dignity, worthy of the giver and equally worthy of the recipient. It is equally true that more recent years, and more recent leadership, have caricatured this noble ideal.

This is why until very recent times, no body ever bothered about the fact of Sri Lanka, as far back as the fifth century A.D. being called Sinhala or the Land of the Lion Descendants [Seng Chia Lo and Shih Tse Kuo in Chinese]. For proof of this, see the Records of the Chinese travelers Fa Hsien and Yuang Chwang of that period. This, I have myself read in the original, while I was a student of Chinese nearly fifty years ago.

It is for this reason that we sponsor the concept of a United Sri Lanka for all Sri Lankans, multi-ethnic, multi-religious and even tolerant of differences of political ideology. This we do with adequate historical backing on which it is not that easy to turn one's back. Nothing short of a wisely decided unfragmented territorial integrity and a concept of total Sri Lankan national harmony will save Sri Lanka from the impending economic, cultural and religious disaster into which we, the rulers as well as the ruled, are directly heading at the moment.

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